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# ***The Impact of Professional Practice Standards in the Professional Development and Performance Assessment of School Directors***

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## **Abstract**

Professional practice standards for school directors serve as a strategic tool to train and prepare school directors, and to improve the quality of education in institutions they lead. Over the last two decades, the education sector in Kosovo has been experiencing continuous changes so that a higher quality and genuine education of new generations is achieved, and having in mind that a school director is a key factor in coordinating the processes within school institutions, there are requirements for their professional development. To verify the usage and the impact of professional practice standards in professional development practice and performance assessment of school directors, a theoretical and empirical research has been carried out with primary and lower secondary school directors (N=26) and upper secondary school directors (N=11) in Prishtina and its suburb. From data analysis resulting from the quantitative approach (N = 37) it has been confirmed that, in Kosovo, the

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professional practice standards are used in average by school directors. These standards are not used to the extent required as an instrument for school directors' performance assessment, neither by themselves through self-assessment, nor by the relevant institutions responsible for evaluating the performance of directors.

**Keywords:** *director, professional development, standards, assessment.*

## ***Introduction***

Good governance or leadership is one of the most important characteristics of successful schools, and this requirement can never be emphasized enough. It should be taken into consideration that the director is the key person in schools of high level, because headed by a strong leader in teaching, who is able to plan, organize, establish pedagogical staff and manage the entire school environment, every school could quickly shift from a school with a low level of results into a learning institution with a high progress (Bäckman & Trafford, 2007). At the same time, the whole aspect of current organisation towards the administration and supervision of public schools is increasing the responsibilities of school directors (Berry & Otto, 1954).

Increase of management and leadership capacities in schools in Kosovo has been and remains one of the priorities of institutions both at national and municipal levels. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), in cooperation with universities, Municipal Education Directories – MEDs, institutions and organisations providing support to education, has developed and delivered a considerable number of training programs in order to enhance leadership capacities in educational institutions in Kosovo (MEST, 2016).

As known, the focus is on building capacities that will enable the creation of a positive working environment for both teachers and students. Also, when it comes to a talented school director, this is associated with the creation of strong and sustainable icons (Coplan, 2003). Taking into account these data, this research addresses the aspects of performance assessment of school directors in the area of educational leadership in Kosovo, identifying the practices applied so far and finally, it aims to compare these practices with other schools from developed countries and provide recommendations for further progress. Therefore, lack of such analysis was the main reason this topic was chosen to be researched and the study aims at testing the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis:** 1] Professional practice standards are a basic tool for professional development and performance assessment of school directors; 2] There is a positive correlation between institutional commitment and performance assessment of directors and deputy directors in pre-university educational institutions.

At the same time, the study tends to answer the following research questions: 1] To what extent and how are professional practice standards for school directors in Kosovo used for their professional development and performance assessment? 2] What is the correlation between institutional commitment and performance assessment of directors and deputy directors in pre-university institutions in Kosovo? 3] How do school directors and deputy directors in the Municipality of Prishtina perceive their experience of performance assessment by relevant authorities?

### ***Towards School Directors' Professional Development***

In recent years, policymakers have been increasingly interested in building school leadership (Kafka, 2009). Therefore, the role of education leaders in Kosovo changed over time, being crucial in terms of school system organization and leadership, taking into account the lack of appropriate conditions after the war. In fact, today, a leader should possess a more strategic, holistic and synergy thinking, looking at things as a whole (Shaked & Schechter, 2013). During these years, educational leaders and school directors continuously tried to reform the education sector, build capacities towards a sustainable change in the sector of education in Kosovo (Buleshkaj, 2013).

In post-conflict Kosovo, many programs of professional development for educational leaders were offered by locals and internationals. The aim of these programs was to address issues related to school leadership, but it is considered that they had many gaps in terms of addressing specific needs of educational leaders in certain educational areas. Whereas, with regard to issues related to educational leaders' recruitment, their capacity building through a sustainable professional development system and the contributions of an effective school management, there was no research because no studies were carried out in this area in Kosovo (Buleshkaj, 2013).

### ***International Practices in Regards to School Directors' Training and Preparation***

With a focus on analysing the international practices applied to train and prepare school directors, examples of several countries that fully apply professional practice standards for professional development and performance assessment of school directors have been presented. Most of these countries consider performance standards for school directors to be a

strategic tool, used not only to train and prepare school leaders, but also to improve the quality of education in their countries. Education is one of the priorities of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which among eight chapters of *Education Today: OECD Perspective 2010*, includes *Improving School Leadership*, as a priority in the work of OECD Education Directory (Istance, 2011).

In these countries, professional practice standards for directors serve as a reference point to develop professional development strategies for directors. There are two different ways to implement these strategies in the countries researched (CEPPE, 2013):

In general, standards for school leadership are focused on school directors (excluding deputy directors), but there are specific cases, such as British Columbia (Canada), where the same indicators are implemented for both directors and deputy directors (same as in Kosovo).

Not all countries in the research, which implement the standards in school directors' professional practice, use them to evaluate directors' performance. For example, although Chile and British Columbia apply standards, their aim is to help directors to professionally lead the schools and be trained accordingly (CEPPE, 2013). Therefore, standards in these countries are not used as an instrument to evaluate directors' performance.

Some countries have developed specific mechanisms to evaluate the compliance with the standards by directors. The results usually determine whether a school director is capable or not to perform his or her role. So, they are related to directors' re-election and are the main reference point during the assessment (same as in Kosovo).

***The example of England*** - The National College for School Leadership - NCSL in Nottingham, England, is an example of

school leadership development program and the support demonstrated for a shared leadership philosophy. The NCSL, established in 2000, is responsible to prepare and develop educational leaders for primary and secondary education in England. The NCSL was established to bring a national focus, the energy and mechanism to ensure that current leaders and school inspirers get the support, recognition and development they need and deserve (NCSL, 2008). Certification by the NCSL is now a requirement to enter leadership (University of Cumbria, 2016).

*The example of Slovenia* - The National School for Leadership in Education - NSLE is responsible for training and professional development of school directors and candidates for directors. The NSLE is a public service and its implementation is of public interest (Erčul & Peček, 2007). The central program of the NSLE is the implementation of the Licensing Program for School directors.

The program consists of six compulsory modules covering leadership and organisational theory, staff building, learning modes, professional development, planning and decision-making, school directors' skills, human resources and legislation (The National Leadership School, 2005). The highlight of this programme is the mentoring programme, since it provides a systematic support to school leaders, creating networks of expert groups at directors' level (Koren, 2007).

*The example of Portugal* - School directors' performance assessment is focused on their tasks and it involves a combination of self-assessment, internal and external assessment. The director does a self-assessment of his/her performance, internal assessment is carried out by the School Board, whereas external assessment is done by the Education and Science Inspectorate. Directors' assessment is based on two

broad parameters: director's engagement to increase quality and his/her management skills (Erasmus +, 2015).

*The example of New Zealand* - directors' assessment is based on the contract signed between the director and school board, defining the specific characteristics of the position, objectives to be achieved and assessment mechanisms. This assessment, although defined and applied at a local level, should include standards for directors from the entire education system (Robinson, & Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009).

### *Practices in Training and Preparing School Directors in Kosovo*

The Administrative Instruction 08/2014 provides a solid basis to avoid ambiguities, gaps and legal constraints so that the role of management positions at schools is professionalised and not considered technical and administrative (MEST, 2014).

Moreover, the curriculum reform, which resulted in a new Curriculum Framework of 2011, reinforced the concept of school-based development. The new curriculum foresees additional responsibilities and greater autonomy for the schools in defining curriculum contents (MEST, 2011).

To summarize, all these aspects lead towards the need to professionalize the role of directors and to change the perception that the role of directors is not administrative but a leadership and development role. This is also regulated legally with the Administrative Instruction 04/2012 on professional practice standards for school directors (MEST, 2012).

Situational analysis: As a developing country, Kosovo has many challenges ahead in the field of education as well, One of those challenges is the change of curriculum, which also affects the work of school leaders (GIZ, 2013). In this case, the responsibility of school directors increases, with the quality



teaching staff being a priority. To achieve this result, a school leader should support the teaching staff throughout the learning process, and understanding and implementing the new curriculum. To emphasize this, the authors (Mitchell and Castle, 2005) also highlight the three qualities that distinguish the conceptualisations of school directors: curriculum expertise, formal aspect of professional development and creation of an informal culture. Therefore, a considerable expertise is expected from school directors related to the mentoring of teaching staff (GIZ, 2013).

Definition of the knowledge basis and standards for the programs for school directors' preparation and training is the key element in the efforts to improve the quality of training programs for school leadership (Buleshkaj, 2013).

### ***A Atep Towards School Directors' Performance Assessment in Kosovo – Based on Legal Provisions***

As mentioned above, in the past, the role of school management was considered administrative and consequently their selection was done based on technical dimensions. This meant election of a successful teacher for the position of school manager (Gjoshi, 2016). In addition, the school directors' professional domain is related to responsibilities and workload, and is considered quite challenging (Poirel & Yvon, 2014). This is due to the fact that schools, being complex and dynamic, constantly require different management models, and leaders need to use a variety of frameworks to solve the problems (Gaziel, 2003).

With the aim of building capacities of school directors, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology adopted the Administrative Instruction on professional practice standards for school directors. These standards focus on six main areas of school leadership, summarizing what school directors are

expected to know, and the activities they need to perform in order to achieve each of the standards (Buleshkaj & Mehmeti, 2013).

*Professional development of educational leaders according to legal provisions:* Based on the Law No. 04/L-032 on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Kosovo, Article 20, item 1, the director and deputy director of an educational institution shall be appointed based on the Law No. 03/L-068 on Education in Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo, 21 May 2008, based on the criteria set by MEST through a by-law (MEST, 2011). Experience in education, teacher's licence and professional development trainings attended are the main requirements for school managers (MEST, 2008). According to these legal documents, criteria such as directors' previous trainings and level of education are deemed more valuable when deciding on their selection; the candidates have to prove their knowledge about education, leadership and the context of the school they compete for, and their professional development activities should continue even after their appointment. The implementation of professional practice standards by directors is legally used as an instrument for directors' self-development and as a reference point for their performance assessment system and instruments.

According to the Law on Pre-University Education in Kosovo, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is the main body responsible to plan, define standards and to ensure a quality pre-university education system (MEST, 2011)

According to the legal provisions of this Law, namely Article 20, item 2: "The director of an educational institution shall have executive responsibility for the management and general administration of the institution." (MEST, 2011)

This Law, providing a legal basis to improve management professionalism in pre-university educational institutions,

encourages future school directors to be trained and professionally developed, for purposes of understanding and implementing professional practice standards as per the legal requirements (MEST, 2011).

Therefore, directors are responsible to define their goals for professional growth that are directly related to the progress and achievements of the school and students in particular.

*Harmonisation of school directors' professional practice standards as per administrative instructions:* According to the Administrative Instruction 08/2014, the selection of management staff in schools in Kosovo is based more on the academic background of candidates, their working experience, but also on the development plan for the school institution the candidate applies to. In addition, for the selection of school directors, hours of professional development are also of primary importance (MEST, 2014).

Therefore, the Administrative Instruction 08/2014 offers a solid ground to avoid ambiguities, gaps and legal constraints in order to have the role of management positions at schools professionalised and not considered as technical and administrative, strengthening the need to have the role of directors professionalized (MEST, 2014).

The Administrative Instruction 04/2012 focuses on school directors' professional practice standards that will serve as a reference point for the employment policies and practices, and school managers' professional development. In regards to professional development, these standards will be used for the following purposes (MEST, 2012):

- To develop, accredit and evaluate school managers' professional development.
- As a reference point for the performance assessment system and instrument for school managers.
- As an instrument for school managers' self-development.

The Standards specified in this Administrative Instruction include (Buleshkaj & Mehmeti, 2013):

- Standard I: Leadership and Motivation
- Standard II: Quality Teaching and Learning
- Standard III: Planning and Management
- Standard IV: Cooperation and Interaction
- Standard V: Legislation and Society
- Standard VI: Professional Ethics.

*General overview of assessment practices:* According to the Law on Pre-University Education, Article 8, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has a duty to inspect schools and, among others, assess the performance of directors. The inspection should be organized in annual planning cycles, with potential special inspections in cases specified by the Inspection Departments within the Ministry (MEST, 2012).

School directors' performance assessment should be done in compliance with the professional practice standards, as defined by MEST, and these standards should serve as assessment instruments.

According to the Kosovo Pedagogical Institute (KPI) document, self-assessment by the director can be done for one standard only, and this implies self-assessment for every standard (for example, Leadership and Motivation standard) as per performance indicators (Buleshkaj & Mehmeti, 2013).

## *Methodology*

The approach applied in this study is the quantitative approach. This approach refers to objectives, hypothesis and research questions, for which quantitative data are needed, and the comparative and assessment study model.

37 school directors from the city of Prishtina and its suburb participated in this research. To have clear conclusions

about the issue researched, the research has been carried out in 37 schools below, including 26 primary and lower secondary schools and 11 high schools. 25 schools are located in urban areas, whereas 12 schools in rural areas<sup>i</sup>.

A questionnaire was used to collect the data and opinions of research participants in regards to the role of directors' professional practice in directors' work and usage of standards in their performance assessment.

The questionnaire was drafted based on the research problem addressed and theoretical aspects of the problem presented in the Literature review chapter.

The data from the questionnaire have been calculated using the SPSS program, descriptive statistics-frequencies have been derived, to continue with the correlation ones to confirm whether variables could be related.

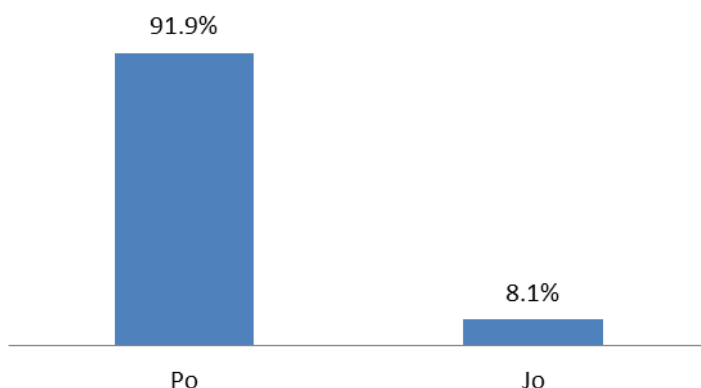
The assessment model that is used in the paper to evaluate whether the process worked, whether certain intervention or change has brought the results intended, examines how an intervention or a process can be improved (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

## ***Research Results***

The data from the participants involved in the research are presented below based on research objectives and research questions, although they are interrelated. The first questions are of a general nature, collecting information from the interviewees so that the researcher could have a closer look on their characteristics.

Based on the responses given to the specific Question No. 5, whether the surveyed directors attended trainings about educational leadership, the findings are the following: 34 cases or 91.8 % had attended trainings, only 3 cases or 8.11% had not

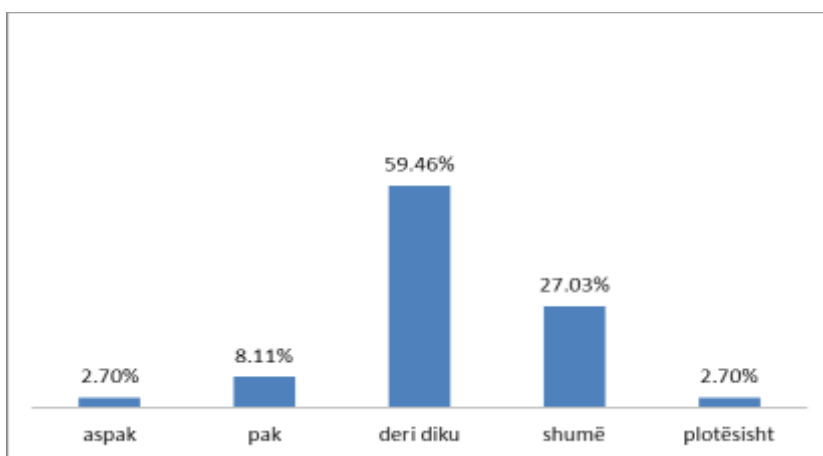
attended trainings (see fig.1), because they were new in their posts.



*Figure 1. Division by attendance of trainings on educational leadership*

One of the key issues in this study concerns the response to **research Question No.1**, which is: To what extent and how are professional practice standards for school directors in Kosovo used for their professional development and performance assessment?

To the Question No. 7 (see fig. 2.) in the questionnaire, which is about the usage of professional practice standards for directors' professional development and performance assessment, the directors responded as follows: 22 directors (59.5%) stated "Somewhat"; 10 (27 %) stated "Much"; 3 (8.1%) stated "Little", 1 (2,7%) stated "Never" and 1 also stated "Always". This question confirms the hypothesis of this research that: in Kosovo, professional practice standards are used for professional development and performance assessment of school directors and deputy directors, but their usage based on the survey results is average (somewhat).



*Figure 2. Division by directors' satisfaction with the usage of professional practice standards for their professional development and performance assessment*

The following (Table No. 1) is an analysis of correlation between the responses in regards to the usage of professional practice standards<sup>ii</sup> in professional development practice and performance assessment of school directors. Responses to all questions prove that these standards are used, and this supports **hypothesis 1**. Professional practice standards serve as a basic tool for directors' professional development and performance assessment.

The following table shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the four questions asked, respectively 14.1, 14.2, 14.3. and 14.4. This is due to the fact that the higher the agreement with the usage of Directors' Performance Assessment System (DPAS) in Kosovo as a reference point and an assessment tool to document the effectiveness of the work carried out by directors through annual assessments, the higher the agreement that the DPAS serves as a tool to help directors focus on the performance areas

and behaviours related to student learning ( $r=.714$ ;  $p<.001$ ). In addition, high agreement in the question 14.1 increases the chances to have a high agreement in the question 14.3 that DPAS serves as a tool for continuous learning and development ( $r=.613$ ;  $p<.001$ ) and question 14.4 that DPAS serves as a tool of collective accountability for school purposes, for directors' objectives and improvement of school ( $r=.483$ ;  $p<.01$ ). On the other hand, there is also significant positive correlation noted between the question 14.2 and 14.3 ( $r=.607$ ;  $p<.001$ ), and between 14.2 and 14.4 ( $r=.544$ ;  $p<.001$ ). ). Significant positive correlation has been found also between the question 14.3 and 14.4 ( $r=.542$ ;  $p<.001$ ).

**Table 1. Correlation of questions with regard to the agreement for the usage of standards**

		Agreement for the usage of standards			
		Question 14.1	Question 14.2	Question 14.3	Question 14.4
Question 14.1	Correlation	1	.714**	.613**	.483**
	Significance	.	.000	.000	.002
	Number	37	37	37	37
Question 14.2	Correlation	.714**	1	.607**	.544**
	Significance	.000		.000	.000
	Number	37	37	37	37
Question 14.3	Correlation	.613**	.607**	1	.542**
	Significance	.000	.000	.	.000
	Number	37	37	37	37
Question 14.4	Correlation	.483**	.544**	.542**	1
	Significance	.002	.000	.001	.
	Number	37	37	37	37

\*\* . Correlation is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)



Table 2 of the following correlations leads us towards examining **the hypothesis 2**, stating: There is a positive correlation between institutional commitment and implementation of performance assessment of directors and deputy directors in pre-university education institutions. Results show that the analysis that was carried out to examine the situation from the perspective of the survey participants for the **research question 2.**: what is the correlation between institutional commitment and implementation of performance assessment of directors and deputy directors in pre-university education institutions in Kosovo, proves that there is no statistically significant correlation in regards to responses for the question 10 and 12<sup>iii</sup>. According to the results, no correlation is noted between the reporting about the experience during performance assessment by authorities and the perception about the quality of this assessment ( $r=.107$ ;  $p>.05$ ).

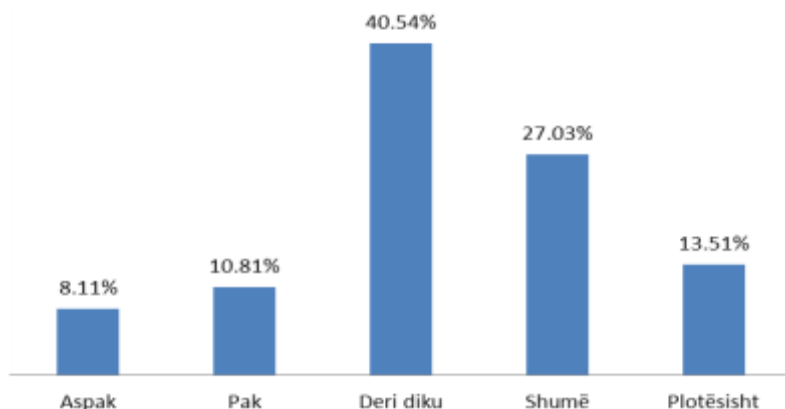
**Table 2. Correlation of questions related to institutional commitment to implement directors' performance assessment.**

Institutional commitment to implement directors' performance assessment.			
		Question 10	Question 12
Question 10	Correlation	1.000	.107
	Significance	.	.546
	Number	34	34
Question 12	Correlation	.107	1.000
	Significance	.546	.
	Number	34	36

In the open responses to question 12, the reasoning provided by survey participants includes: "performance assessment has been formal and he/she did not receive any assessment report"; "it should be done more frequently and the assessment report should be provided, so that it can be used to reflect and improve the performance"; "I cannot answer the question because no performance assessment of me was done"; "relevant authorities consist of incompetent individuals, there is no motivation to advance the processes and there are no regular procedures"; "there is no specific regulation, and this creates misunderstanding and undermines the assessment processes".

Apart from the assessment by relevant authorities, the directors were asked (question 13) whether they did a self-assessment of their performance, as defined in the professional practice standards for school directors. According to figure 2, there is an average level of self-assessment by directors, 15 cases (40%) "somewhat", followed by 10 cases (27%) "Much", 5 cases (13.5%) "Always", 4 cases (10.8%) "Little", and 3 cases (8.1%) "Never".

This proves that in Kosovo school directors do not perform self-assessments, not even after their first year of work, as practised in other countries that have been analysed in this research in order to make a comparison between them and the approach in Kosovo about this issue.



*Figure 3. Percentage with regard to self-assessment practised by directors*

In regards to the **research question 3**: What is the perception of school directors and deputy directors in the Municipality of Prishtina about their experience of performance assessment done by relevant authorities?, we managed to define it through question No. 9 in the questionnaire (open question type) about the usage of professional practice standards in directors' performance assessment, and the participants mainly stated that they did not have the chance to be assessed as per professional practice standards. They even asserted that no external assessment ever took place, but based on their knowledge, that say that these standards should serve as a reference point for their performance assessment. Standards are used by directors only for self-assessment purposes. According to them, they try to implement these standards in their work and that someday their activities within the school will serve as a proof and will be used as a reference point whenever an external assessment is done. In addition, there were cases when directors described how the standards should be used, not

because they had their performance assessment done that way, but based on the knowledge attained in trainings they attended and by referring to the Administrative Instruction 04/2012 on Professional Practice Standards for School Directors. One of the directors says that “these standards are used by the Municipal Education Directory (MED), by Inspectorate, and based on these standards they draft the performance report for a director over the years of his/her mandate, after the External School Performance Assessment has been analysed. One of the directors says that “these standards are used to measure the quality of his work in relation to teachers, students and community, the progress achieved in his school with him as a director”.

Based on the responses received, directors’ perception about their experience during their performance assessment by relevant authorities is below satisfactory and expectations.

### ***Discussions***

The following is a summary of research results, which will be analysed and commented upon in the part dedicated to discussions. The analysis is based on the research questions and their respective hypothesis, divided in two subtitle categories.

#### ***Professional Practice Standards for School Directors and Policies, Procedures and Approaches for Professional Development***

Professional development of directors that were part of this research is based on knowledge, understanding and performance indicators of professional practice standards.

The engagement is not only individual, school directors are not the only ones to aim at and strive for professional development for their staff, but from the literature review, it

has been concluded theoretically that relevant institutions also are constantly making efforts to support school directors in this direction. The results of these efforts, according to directors, will be seen in the coming years.

In line with the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021, and based on PISA 2015 Recommendations, it is noted that considerable efforts were dedicated to the professional development of teachers and school directors in Kosovo. From the direct meetings, we personally noticed the directors' very professional approach and adequate knowledge about the topic being researched.

The directors surveyed stated that they intended to follow the standards and be developed professionally, but they did not do that convincingly, based on response rates (59.46 somewhat, 29.73% positive). On the other hand, when the depth of the responses is measured, correlation analysis affirms that standards are considered the main tool to document the effectiveness of directors' work, to help directors focus on performance areas and behaviours related to student learning, continuous learning and development, collective accountability for school purposes, directors' objectives and school improvement. Therefore, the **hypothesis 1** is considered **to be supported**: Professional practice standards serve as a basic tool for directors' professional development and performance assessment.

So, results show that every standard is recognised and intended to be achieved, but still implementation of policies and approaches to professional development and performance assessment of directors in pre-university education institutions is fragile.

Anyhow, in regards to the implementation of policies for professional development of school directors in Kosovo, we may say that the implementation of professional practice

standards for directors has been presented by the MEST with an Administrative Instruction (AI 04/2012), stating that school directors are legally obliged to implement them. But the results prove that only half of the schools surveyed implement these standards. Implementation of these standards in the work of directors does not happen in practice because it results that half of directors have no knowledge about these standards. They might have been in trainings where standards were mentioned, but apparently no initiative has been taken by directors and no incentive and institutional support has been given to implement them.

It is believed that relevant institutions have observed only a number of pilot schools to see whether requirements from the Administrative Instruction 04/2012 are being implemented, whereas the other unmonitored schools, which represent the majority of schools, do not apply such standards.

From the results, it is noted that directors attended all the trainings offered over the years to be updated with the requirements of local professional development policies and they state that during the trainings they were informed about the standards. In addition, from the questionnaire, it is noted that they have been profiled also through their Master studies in educational leadership, in order to be as competent as possible for the job.

Therefore, we may say that in practice educational leaders' professional development results to be successful, it even has an impact in improving school leadership. The advancement of leadership in schools has been a huge investment area for international donors and local in-service training providers.

This is confirmed by the participants' responses to Question No. 5 in the questionnaire, where the directors stated that they had professionally benefited from the following

trainings: Management and Leadership in Education, provided by GIZ; Finnish Support for Development of Education in Kosovo (FSDEK); and The Leadership by the NGO "DRIT"; Kosovo Educator Development Project (KEDP); Education Participation Project by the Kosovo Education Center (KEC); Basic Education Program trainings (MEST).

### ***Performance Assessment of Directors and Institutional Commitment***

Performance assessment of school directors in Kosovo and institutional commitment to this process have been the key issues researched in this study.

As research findings above suggest, professional practice standards are used to a certain extent to evaluate the performance of directors. There are cases when directors have never been assessed or cases when assessment was done, but it is unknown whether assessment standards were followed. In many cases, directors were not informed about assessment results; they never received an assessment report. This is not a situation noted in European countries analysed above (see the Theoretical Framework). A low number of school directors try to apply professional practice standards in their work.

Since less than half of the participants stated that they had had a positive experience during their performance assessment by relevant authorities, it can be concluded that institutional commitment to implement the performance assessment of directors in pre-university education institutions in Kosovo is average. This conclusion **fails to support the research hypothesis 2**, which states that there is a positive correlation between institutional commitment and implementation of performance assessment of directors and deputy directors in pre-university education institutions.

On the other hand, a problem which was identified in this research is the low level of self-assessment practised by school directors, which also aims to respond to research Question No.3. No reasons have been identified, but apparently directors do not consider self-assessment a way to reflect on their performance. They simply expect to be assessed by authorities at the end of their mandate and the assessment feedback given verbally is acceptable by them, therefore they do not ask for an official report. On the other hand, the public has no access in assessment reports for directors, and enabling this in the future would be positive (see the practice of England above).

The results mentioned above strongly highlight the responsibility and the role of directors, and according to Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999), a good and a democratic director encourages staff participation and delegates maturely, but never forgets that he/she holds the main leadership responsibility.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

From a general perspective, the research focused on verifying whether professional practice standards are used for professional development and performance assessment of directors in schools.

Following the data analysis, we have reached the conclusion that:

School directors in Kosovo have had the opportunity to attend at least one training on educational leadership, and they were informed about professional practice standards for school directors. In regards to procedures and directors' approach to their professional development, it has been concluded that they constantly try to advance in the area of professional development.



The directors intend to follow standards and be developed professionally, but a considerable number of them have no sufficient knowledge yet about professional practice standards, and consequently, although they consider that standards are a basic tool for efficiency in their work, a number of them have dilemmas in applying these standards. Usage of professional practice standards for school directors in Kosovo for professional development and performance assessment is satisfactory. Standards will be used more when awareness is raised about their usefulness.

On the other hand, the satisfaction of school directors with performance assessment done by relevant authorities is below average, since more than half of directors have never been evaluated. The others only received a confirmation of positive assessment, but no suggestions and recommendation were provided to improve their practices in line with the standards in areas needing improvement. Authorities in charge of performing assessment are not sufficiently committed to this process. This is due to several reasons, but above all due to the rapid transition in the area of education over the last years and all these new approaches and policies require some time and space to be understood and applied as expected.

Performance assessment of directors by relevant authorities is not considered as a provocation (judgement) by directors. They consider that this process is necessary to help them have an overview of their work and would help them to improve the quality of work when necessary.

Cases of practices of directors' self-assessment based on professional standards are rare. Less than a half (40% only) of the directors have done a self-assessment of their performance. No clarification was provided, but despite the fact that the directors believe that performance assessment is needed, still they do not apply it.

Policies and approaches to professional development and performance assessment of directors in pre-university education in Kosovo are similar to countries that have performance standards for school directors.

In conclusion, we may say that the first hypothesis of this research has been supported, whereas the second hypothesis resulted incorrect.

Based on this research, we can make the following recommendations:

- A state program of measures for school directors' professional development should be drafted.
- Mechanisms to motivate school directors to implement the professional practice standards in their work should be applied.
- Trainings for school directors should be developed so that they can exchange their experiences with other countries that successfully apply professional practice standards for school directors.
- A precisely defined timeline for self-assessment and external assessment should be developed.
- Relevant authorities should be more committed to the performance assessment for school directors. The assessment should be done based on standards, school directors should be informed on time about their performance results and professional support should be provided to fill in the gaps, if necessary.
- School directors should apply self-assessment more frequently and use the findings from this process to increase their work quality and efficiency.

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<sup>i</sup> Participating schools in this research: PLSS "Afrim Gashi" Hajvali; PLSS "Qamil Batalli" Prishtina; PLSS "Nazim Gafurri" Prishtina; PLSS "Elena Gjika" Prishtina; PLSS "Xhavit Ahmeti" Prishtina; PLSS "Ali Kelmendi" Barileva; PLSS "Asim Vokshi" Prishtina; PLSS "Dituria" Shkabaj; PLSS "Pjetër Bogdani" Prishtina; PLSS "Faik Konica" Prishtina; PLSS "Hilmi Rakovica" Prishtina; PLSS "Shkëndija" Hajvali; PLSS "Isa Boletini" Busi; PLSS "Shkolla e Gjelbër" Prishtina; PLSS "Emin Duraku" Prishtina; PLSS "Hasan Prishtina" Millosheva; PLSS "Ismail Qemali" Prishtina; PLSS "Migjeni" Siboc; PLSS "Ditët e Minatorit" Kishëz; PLSS "Rilindja" Keqekollë; PLSS "Gjergj Fishta" Prishtina; PLSS "Iliria" Prishtina; PLSS "Pavarësia" Siboc; PLSS "Nexhmi Mustafa" Besi; PLSS "Ibrahim Rugova" Obiliq; PLSS "Avni Rustemi" Mramor; "Abdyl Frashëri" High School Prishtina; "Prenk Jakova" High School Prishtina; "28 Nëntori" High School Prishtina; "Amet Gashi" High School Prishtina; "Ali Sokoli" High School Prishtina; "Shtefën Gjeqovi" High School Prishtina; "Sami Frashëri" High School Prishtina; "Gjin Gazulli" High School Prishtina; "Eqrem Cabej" High School Prishtina, "Gjimnazi Matematikor" High School Prishtina; "7 Shtatori" High School Prishtina

Question 14. To what extent do you agree with the following assumptions: Directors' Performance Assessment System (DPAS) in Kosovo: 1. Serves as a reference point and as an assessment tool to document the working effectiveness of directors through annual assessments; 2 Serves as a tool to help directors focus on performance areas and behaviours related to student learning 3. Serves as a tool for continuous learning and development; 4. Serves as a tool for collective accountability for school purposes, for directors' objectives and improvement of school.

<sup>iii</sup> 10. What is your opinion about the performance assessment process performed by relevant authorities?

12. Do you think that your performance assessment by the relevant institutions/competent persons was at the level required?

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